Black&Sexy TV, an online video studio based in Los Angeles, is home to the creators of popular series like Hello Cupid and RoomieLoverFriends, as well as feature film That Guy. They are dedicatedly independent, own their content, and control their distribution strategy.

By staying extremely tuned in to their viewers’ interests, the team has grown an active and engaged audience of loyal fans. This audience has supported them in building a sustainable business in which they continue to publish free videos on their YouTube channel of 120,000+ subscribers (and growing). Simultaneously, they offer fans the option to purchase new content episode by episode, or subscribe to Black&Sexy TV their exclusive subscription service, powered by Vimeo.

Objective 1
Monetize a popular web series beyond ad revenue

Strategy
Sell individual videos directly from their own website

Black&Sexy TV’s initial experiments in monetization involved giving away the majority of their videos on YouTube, where it was easy for new viewers to discover them, followed by selling a small portion of videos transactionally via their website. They published episodes of their web series Hello Cupid and RoomieLoverFriends on their YouTube channel and exclusively sold the season finales for $3 each, with a $5 special edition bundle that included bonus content.

They were successful both in generating revenue and getting a positive response from their audience. They graduated to producing a feature film, That Guy, based on their popular web series of the same name. Before releasing the film on Christmas day, they made it available for pre-order in advance, which they promoted and marketed to fans and previous customers at a price point of $10. Pre-sales alone paid for production of the film.

Now, with transactional sales and subscriptions, Black&Sexy TV can make in a month on Vimeo the $35,000 in ad revenue they made in a year on YouTube. With this hybrid model of YouTube as a portal for discovery and Vimeo as a direct distribution platform, they are on track to make $1 million on Vimeo alone this year.

Objective 2
Transition from giving away videos to charging

Strategy
Build a connection with the audience so fans know that their purchases are contributing directly to videos they love
By building and maintaining a sincere dialogue with fans, the team was able to sell videos with their fans’ enthusiastic support, as opposed to surprising viewers by suddenly charging for something that was once free. They created videos and new series exclusively for the purpose of transactional sales, and their audience was more than happy to pay for access—conversions for purchases referred from YouTube on their episodes average between 40% and just over 60%.

Part of making that transition was taking the time to build the relationship with their community before charging for anything:

“Our audience has been very vocal about wanting to pay for content and see our network grow. This didn’t happen overnight. We took our time getting into this by establishing trust and consistency with our programming and community-building along the way. There was a natural and steady progression from largely self-funding, to crowdfunding, to single pay-per-view events on Vimeo for our series season finales, to now merging into monthly subscriptions. Our audience members who still aren’t willing to pay yet are being educated and encouraged to do so from our subscribers—that part is great to watch as we keep growing.”

- Numa Perrier, co-creator, Black&Sexy TV.

Objective 3
Own their relationship with their fans and increase revenue from their work

Strategy
Launch a paid subscription service

Fans made it clear in comments and social media that they wanted the convenience of paying Black&Sexy TV on a recurring basis for the paid content, as opposed to pulling out their credit card for every sale. This spurred the team to launch their own subscription service, Black&Sexy TV, powered by Vimeo and hosted on their own website for $7/month.

With subscriptions powered by Vimeo, the team can distribute work to fans as often as they like, just like other social networks, but from their own branded website. With Vimeo, they are able to collect robust traffic and customer data from subscribers so they can make responsive marketing and production choices, continue to build their relationship with fans, and finance the production of new content. They met their initial goal for subscriber sign-ups within the first month of launch and are growing in each subsequent month.

“We are building a business and Vimeo was the best solution for us, because it doesn’t stand between us and our audience. In fact, it offers you flexible tools to better communicate and connect with your fans while encouraging more sales and growth. With the new subscription platform, we have the ability to offer more content at a better price point for our audience while creating a reliable monthly income for us. It’s another win/win for everyone.”

- Dennis Dortch, co-creator, Black&Sexy TV.

To learn more about Black&Sexy TV, visit their OTT site here →